

this state. We mandate those things because we are the ones under the Constitution responsible for education. We mandate those things because we believe that there should be some minimums and in the process of setting minimums we mandate what those minimums should be. But in the instance of the 1,080 hours, it is a very strange thing. We, in effect, removed a mandate last year. Previous to that we had set in statute a set number of days, 175 days, that we told the school districts they had to operate a school system and then under the rules and regulations developed there was a set number of hours that had to be offered during that set number of days and in grand total it came up to not very much less than a 1,080 hours. We decided last year that we are going to change to a total number of hours being 1,080 for a secondary school system which admittedly is a few more hours during the year but not that many more and then we said, you figure it out. You can adjust your school day or your school year any way you want to, so in effect removed a mandate. Many, many of the school districts have done that. As a matter of fact, practically all of the school districts have already set their schedules for next year. In setting their schedules for next year, they did make some changes in many cases because of the 1,080 hours, the removal of that mandate, and because that 1,080 hours included a few more hours, it in effect caused some school districts to either offer more days or more hours per day, sometimes a matter of minutes per day. Many of the teachers across this state who are hard working underpaid individuals, maybe if they were paid enough, maybe if they were paid appropriately, maybe they wouldn't have made the decisions they made. But many of the teachers said, you know, we don't want to work those extra hours unless we get paid more money. We don't want to work that extra day or two unless we get paid more money. We don't want to spend that extra time in the classroom unless we get paid more money. And they really didn't want to go to their local school district and negotiate for those extra dollars because they wanted to blame us, the Legislature, for extending the school year. Now I think we made a correct decision last year. I think we made a correct decision to go to the 1,080 hours and for us say that now we really didn't mean it because we have got some school teachers out there who are going to have to go through the negotiation process to get more money that they may or may not be entitled to, that we should somehow change what we attempted to do last year and set it back under the Withem proposal